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## DECORATIVE ART IN LONDON.

BY HENRY B. WHEATLEY.

DURING the last month things have been somewhat quiet, not to say dull, and at the present time all art talk centres round the exhibitions just opened or about to be opened. Although pictures are among the most charming of decorations, they are unfortunately also among the most expensive, and it is very few who can afford to decorate their rooms with the classical subjects of Leighton and Alma Tadema, the portraits of Millais, or the landscapes of Vicat Cole, Leader, Brett, Keeley Halswelle and Mac Whister. All of these artists and many more have fine examples of their art in the Royal Academy, and after looking at them in the various galleries, the ordinary visitor finds himself tired and unfit for study when he arrives at the twelfth room where the architectural drawings are placed. Here are some pleasing designs of elevations and interiors and one notices how strong the medieval taste still is from the number of country houses designed in imitation of the old timber and half timber buildings of former centuries. This room also contains designs for stained glass windows, studies for ceiling, and other decorative subjects. The Grosvenor Gallery, where Mr. Burne Jones takes the lead, also has its complement of fine pictures, and the Institution of Painters in Water Colors a very charming collection of lighter works.

Some interest is felt in the Mortlake tapestries of two of Raffaele's cartoons, which the Duke of Buccleuch will exhibit at the exhibition shortly to be opened at Wolverhampton. One of the subjects is the "Death of Sapphira" which is a companion to the well-known "Death of Ananias," but is not included in the ordinary lists of Raffaele's works. Some fine antique French furniture belonging to the late Marquis of Donegal, was sold lately at Messrs. Christie, and the various objects realized high prices. A small table with a plateau of Sevres on the top fetched £400, and the same sum was given for an oblong plateau (18 inches long by 12 inches wide) grosbleu ground, green and gold medallions, the centre painted with a large oval medallion of two children in a landscape by Viellard, which formed the top of a Louis XVI. table.

At the Exhibition of Carpentry and Joinery about to be held at Carpenters' Hall, the Council of the Royal Institute of British Architects have promised to exhibit some of the drawings, etc., illustrative of those subjects in their library. The Architectural Museum will exhibit the well-known drawings of the Flèche, of Amiens Cathedral, by the late William Burges, and Mr. Street will contribute his father's drawings for the roof and flèche over the Law Courts.

Some remarkable endoliths or pictures in stone are now being exhibited in Piccadilly by Dr. Hand Smith. By some process which is not explained, highly ornamented marbles are obtained from pure white marble, and besides this pictures are shown which penetrate into the substance of the stone, and are so perfect that it is said cross sections can be cut off which show the same picture as that on the surface.

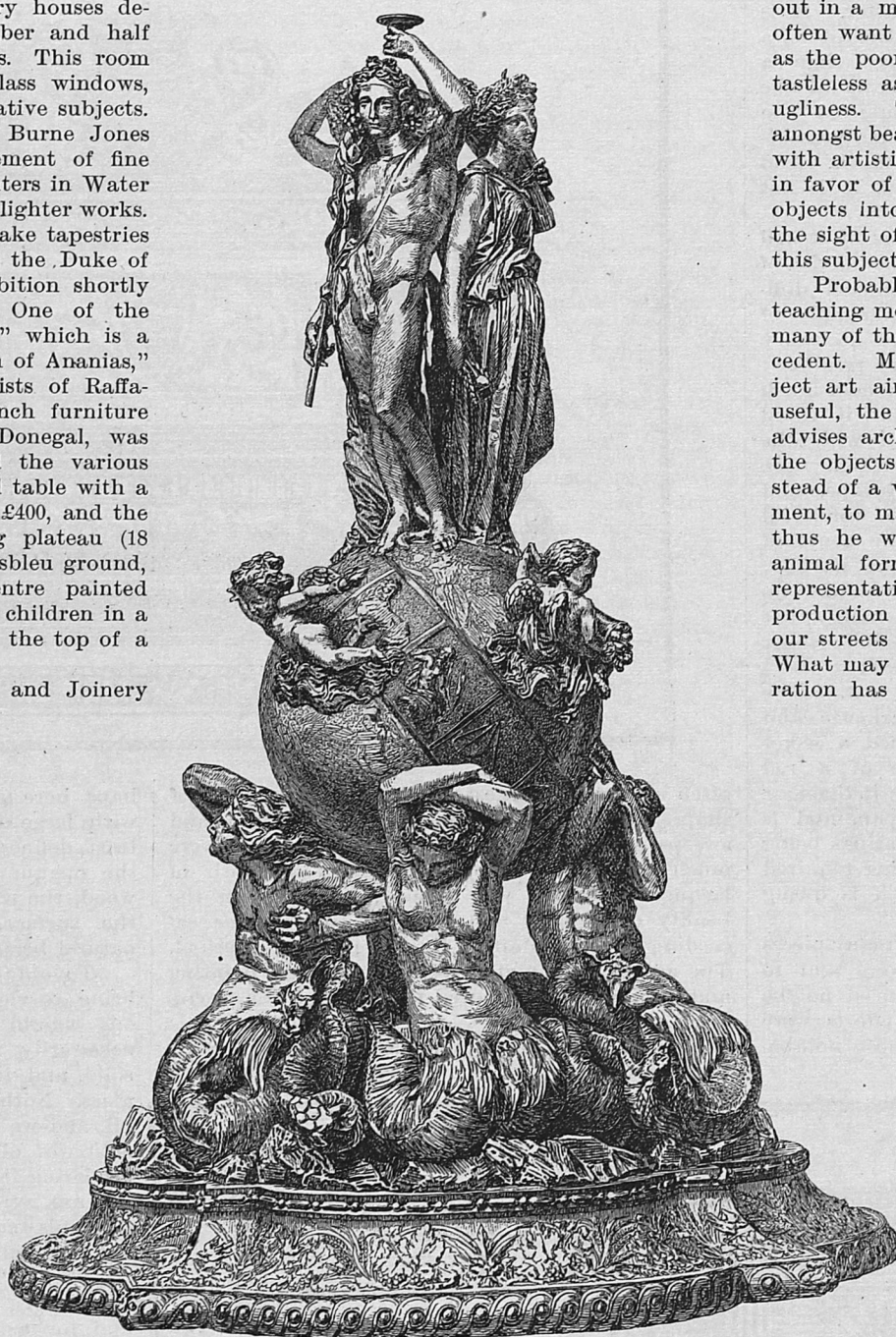
A Munich firm, Messrs. Kuny & Marx, have patented a new material which they call "wood carpet." It is prepared from wood fibre, felted by the aid of oxydized linseed oil and a coloring matter on to a jute fabric, the back of which is coated with varnish. The material is said to be easily cleaned, and to be somewhat like linoleum, but cheaper in price.

Several practical minds appear to be directed to the question of housing the very poor. All the buildings hitherto erected have been too expensive to supply the wants of the poorest classes, but it is hoped that healthy rooms at a low rent may in time be procured from companies formed on a sound financial basis. Sir Edward Watkin has asked for tenders for building rooms that can be let at eighteen pence a week or even under that low amount. If the response is at all satisfactory companies will probably be formed to carry out an undertaking which is of the greatest importance to the well-being of our country.

Several of our public offices have long been very badly housed, and at last preparations are being made for an extensive demolition at Whitehall and Charing Cross. Large buildings are to

be erected for the Admiralty and War Office, and, doubtless, the appearance of the street will be greatly improved, but one cannot but regret the destruction of the picturesque appearance of spring gardens from St. James's Park. The proceedings in connection with the competition of designs have been rather amusing.

It has been usual for the architectural profession to complain that the judges in such competitions have not usually been experts, and also that the awards have been too long delayed. Now professional judges have been appointed and the complaint is raised that the selections have been made too quickly. A competitor writes to one of the architectural papers to the effect that 130 architects competed, and as each set of designs contained six plans, three sections and three elevations, there would be 1,560 elaborate drawings and 130 reports, and these were all considered in 23 days. Nine designs have been selected in the preliminary competition, and the complaint is made that the selections have fallen upon unknown names, but this can scarcely be considered a valid objection.



CENTRE PIECE FOR TABLE, IN SILVER.

Theatre building continues with unabated vigor, and it is impossible not to feel that the great increase in the number of these highly inflammable houses must greatly add to the danger from fire to those who are in their neighborhood. One new theatre in an important thoroughfare is joined to an hotel, which seems an unsatisfactory arrangement. It is reassuring to know that managers are now paying more attention to the important question of fire extinction. It is, however, quite possible to have a number of very excellent arrangements for the purpose which are found to be useless when required, either because they will not work or because the people whose duty it is are not able to work them. The introduction, therefore, into theatres of a thorough fire drill which shall constantly be carried out, is a very excellent innovation likely to make audiences feel more at their ease.

The hopeful and the hopeless prophets continue to preach, and the art workers need not be without good advice to guide them, but unfortunately the advice sometimes is not easy to follow. There is certainly much to cause gloominess in

the minds of those who consider the constant growth of ugly streets in our towns and the destruction of our beautiful scenery by inartistic erections; but there is really no reason why our modern useful works should be ugly, and those who have artistic feeling should strain every nerve so that these works may no longer be offensive to the eye. Mr. Ruskin says we live in an ugly age, but Mr. Oscar Wilde, while lately expressing disagreement with the great teacher, made the remark that "the true artist did not wait until life became picturesque for others, but he took care to see life under picturesque conditions always."

Mr. William Morris has been further elucidating his socialistic views in a discussion on the relation between Art and Labor, and the Dean of St. Paul's in his sermon on Easter day, spoke on Beauty and Art in their relations to Religion. He said that the consideration of this subject opened up an important way of helping the poor. True art should go hand in hand with sanitary endeavor, in the attempt to raise the poor out of their unhealthy and squalid surroundings. But this requires earnest workers, and must not be carried out in a mere dilettante spirit. In truth the rich often want quite as much teaching in this respect as the poor, and doubtless the reason we are so tasteless as a rule is that we are surrounded by ugliness. The Italians, on the contrary, grow up amongst beauty, and cannot well fail to be imbued with artistic feeling. This makes out a good case in favor of the movement for introducing artistic objects into schools, and accustoming children to the sight of beauty. Archdeacon Farrar spoke on this subject lately at Bradford.

Probably no class requires common sense teaching more than the architects do, for they are many of them bound down hand and foot to precedent. Mr. T. W. Camm has taken for his subject art aims in architecture, and he makes the useful, the beautiful, and the true his text. He advises architects to treat buildings according to the objects for which they are designed, and instead of a worn-out repetition of inanimate ornament, to make their plans full of life and interest, thus he would decorate a butcher's shop with animal forms, and a vegetarian restaurant with representations of vegetables in their growth and production as food. If this plan was carried out, our streets would put on quite a new appearance. What may be done in this way for interior decoration has just been shown by Mr. John Schareberger at his bakery in West Kensington. Behind the counter are a series of large mural paintings, illustrating the operations of plowing, sowing, reaping, thrashing, milling and baking. Each painting is about five feet high and three and a half wide, and is on Doulton tiles, burnt in. The plowing scene represents a pair of gray horses, going up a furrow, with the plow and plowman behind them. Sowing is represented by a man throwing his seed broadcast over the plowed land, out of the hopper in front of him. Reaping shows two men with the ringing scythe, cutting its way among the golden stalks of the heavy crop of wheat. An interior scene exhibits the thrashing operation. An old English mill, and a woman with peel in hand working at the oven mouth make two pictures which complete the series.

A novel application of brass is partly to be made in the decoration of the ceiling of a principal room in one of our most important city buildings shortly approaching completion, and this is as moldings to figured colored tiles to be sunk in the panels of the ceiling. The embellishment is likely to attract much attention, and cannot be otherwise than pleasing.

EXPERIMENTS have for some time been made in Belgium for preserving wood by exhausting the air from the pores and filling them with liquid gutta percha. The gutta percha is liquified by mixing it with paraffine and subjecting to heat. After it is introduced into the pores it hardens as it becomes cold.

A brass bedstead forms a most effective centre piece to a lady's apartment, nor for this does it require that the whole or part of other articles should be of the same material. Drapery depending from an embossed brass canopy at the head, well figured in color, capitally sets it off. There is, indeed, no style of furniture in a room which brass will not set off.